



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Dry Creek Water Users Agreement Approved

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) Board of Directors today approved an agreement between the Agency and the Dry Creek Agricultural Water Users, Inc. (Dry Creek Corporation) to resolve competing water rights claims and better manage the water resources in the Dry Creek Valley.

“The agreement adopted today reflects the desire of both the Agency and the Dry Creek Corporation to work together to manage water resources in the Dry Creek Valley,” said Sonoma County Supervisor and Chairman Paul Kelley.

Since 1998, Agency representatives and landowners in Dry Creek Valley have been discussing the pumping of water in Dry Creek Valley. Water the Agency releases from Warm Springs Dam-Lake Sonoma flows down Dry Creek and the Russian River to the Wohler-Mirabel area, where the Agency pumps it from the river for distribution. At the same time, landowners in Dry Creek Valley pump water from Dry Creek, and from wells that may affect Dry Creek flows, for vineyard irrigation and frost protection, winery, domestic, and other purposes. The diversion of flow from Dry Creek by landowners is of concern because the Agency is required to maintain certain minimum streamflows at specific locations in Dry Creek, regardless of the extent of landowners’ pumping.

The agreement stems from an authorization by the Agency Board of Directors to negotiate an agreement between the Agency and the Dry Creek Corporation with the stated goal of setting reasonable pumping limits on the landowners and avoid costly and divisive water rights litigation.

Key provisions of the agreement are:

- The Agency will not object to pumping and use of water by Dry Creek Corporation (Corporation) members so long as such pumping and use is authorized under individual contracts between the Corporation and its members. These individual contracts collectively will limit total pumping by all Corporation members to 6,000 acre-feet annually.

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- The agreement will not authorize either the Corporation or any Corporation member to pump or use any water under any of the Agency's water rights.
- Metered water use records will be kept by the Corporation for its members, and actual water use will be reported to the Agency periodically.
- The Dry Creek Corporation will provide the Agency with a weekly forecast of the estimated total amount that Dry Creek Corporation members will pump during the months of June through October. The Agency will provide staff or consultants to assist with forecasting.
- The Dry Creek Corporation and its members will also assist the Agency with obtaining additional access to Dry Creek in order to collect fisheries and hydrological data and cooperate with the Agency in evaluating impacts of pumping in the Dry Creek Valley on the flow in Dry Creek.

The agreement will remain in effect until 2022 and is only an accommodation of existing water rights claims between the Corporation, its members and the Agency and does not authorize any changed or additional uses of water.

For more information, contact Brad Sherwood, public information specialist, at 707.521.6204 or sherwood@scwa.ca.gov.

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